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## **Realistic expectations: accounting for young people's progress in training programmes**

### **Abstract**

#### **Purpose**

This paper aims to communicate the challenges and tensions faced by front-line workers in negotiating the demands of performance targets and those of the young people they work with.

#### **Design/methodology/approach**

An in-depth study, over a two-year period, of a number of training programmes combining participant observation and qualitative directed data collection.

#### **Findings**

Workers need to be sensitive to young people's previous educational experiences and social context while encouraging participation in education-based work. Personal problems had to be addressed if progress towards the target of education, employment or training was to be achieved. Effective programmes rely upon the front-line workers but the systems of accountability cannot consider developmental work and the significance of young people's immediate context. The role of training programmes needs to be understood within the wider socio-economic context.

**Research limitations/implications**

The study of a small number of training programmes so it is not possible to generalise from the findings. A limitation of the paper is that the ethical, moral and practical implications of the study are not explored.

**Practical implications**

This paper aimed to communicate and extend understanding of the complexity involved in the delivery of training programmes for young people.

**Originality/value of paper**

Providing practitioners working in training settings with an account of the work which may address some of the criticisms often levelled at this area. It has potential value to inform policy implementation and the recording of outcomes in the area of youth training.

**Keywords:** accountability, performance, young people, training programmes.

**Classification:** Research paper

## **Realistic expectations: accounting for young people's progress in training programmes**

Training programmes, and related welfare-to-work policies intended to reduce youth unemployment, have been criticised for normalising the exclusion of 16-17 year-olds from the labour market through imposed youth training to bridge the school to work gap (Roberts, 1995; Allard, 1996). Widespread reforms to the welfare state, training and employment, based upon a critique of welfare dependency, were implemented in Britain during a time of structural changes in the economy and labour market, including high unemployment levels, industrial decline and a rise in the service sector (Ashton, *et al.*, 1989; Fergusson, 2002). Youth employment opportunities were significantly affected, particularly for those with few educational qualifications (Allard, 1996) and youth training took on new meaning in 1988 with the withdrawal of means-tested benefits for those under the age of 18 and the compulsory registration of 16-17 year-olds on newly created Youth Training Schemes (YTS), under the 'guarantee' of a place for all young people. The structural inadequacy of the schemes, aimed at the supply side of the labour market without reciprocal employment opportunities, and the implications for young people have been well documented. These include: the failure to provide a place for all; the variable quality of training not leading to employment; lack of consideration of young people's circumstances; targeted funding leading to selective training; and the poor reputation of the schemes (Craig, 1991; Maclagan, 1992). By the mid 1990s, education and improving the qualifications of the workforce, was replacing training schemes as the positive alternative to youth employment (Allard, 1996).

Policies related to training programmes are dominated by discourses of individualisation and based on a deficit model of the individual, where unemployment is located in an individual's lack of employability (Brine, 2002; Archer and Yamashita, 2003; Salisbury, 2004). Such assumptions underpin New Labour's agenda to tackle social exclusion, disaffection and disengagement. Central to this agenda is reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (commonly referred to as NEETs) (Department for

Education and Employment, 1999b; Social Exclusion Unit, 1999; Department for Education and Skills, 2005). This was given renewed focus in 2007 with a NEET strategy introduced to sharply reduce these numbers, which included extra measures for tracking and financial incentives to remain in learning, and a Public Service Agreement (PSA 14) to measure this target (Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c). This aim is embedded within policies to transform the education system for 14-19 year-olds and to widen post-16 participation and develop a highly skilled workforce (DfES, 2002; 2005). Emphasis is placed upon extended transition into further education or vocational training, with discourses of young people as 'learners' and a shift towards the Learner Society, and successful transition related to economic independence (Ball, *et al.*, 2000; Dean, 2003; Attwood, *et al.*, 2004). Under the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) the framework for post-16 learning encompassed reforms, including the 'Learning Gateway' and the Connexions Service, to integrate support and advice for young people. Provision would be coherent and responsive to individual needs and address the implications of the long-term decline in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs for young people (DfEE, 1999a; DfES, 2002). [<sup>1</sup>]

This approach has been criticised for failing to address the multi-dimensional aspects of inequality and disadvantage, such as disability, ethnicity and sexuality (Colley and Hodgkinson, 2001) with NEET status characterised as a mainly white (male) issue and a consequence of de-industrialised working class communities (Britton, 2002). Such discourses could lead to further marginalisation for those with negative experiences of education, few qualifications (Attwood, *et al.*, 2004) and learning difficulties (Hodgson, 2002) unless full consideration is given the macroeconomic determinants of unemployment and the re-structuring of the labour market. Life chances can still largely be predicted by an individual's location within social structures (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) and questions of labour market attachment cannot be addressed without acknowledging multiple issues intimately bound up with family and social context that shape young people's lives (Dean, 2003). Rather, young people's agency is presented as the dominant factor in transition to the labour market with

motivation to work masking broader social determinants (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Craig and Reiter, 2005).

This paper is concerned with the implementation of these policies and specifically, the way in which those engaging with young people are held accountable for their performance. Central to current concepts of accountability is the notion that performance can be reported on, compared and managed through indicators and targets (Salisbury, 2004). For post-16 provision this includes LSC achievement targets for the number of 19 year-olds qualified to at least NVQ level 2 and participation targets for the number of 16-18 year-olds participating in learning (GHK, 2004). The Connexions Service has been charged with reducing the number of NEETs and the performance of training providers is measured on the numbers of young people entering education, training or employment. Performance thus equates to conformance with policy targets (Barrett, 2004). Ranson (2003) argues that the preoccupation with specifying targets and measuring outcomes presents a quantifiable model of quality which distorts the practice of public services. It has been identified that as a result of this context the main endeavour of front-line workers is to meet the output measures (Colley and Hodkinson, 2001; Lloyd and Payne, 2003). In this sense, accountability for externally defined objectives affects the way services are delivered (Barrett, 2004; Ranson, 2003).

Excluded from such accounts of services are any positive, non-quantifiable aspects of interventions, in this context the detail of one-to-one attention from front-line workers assisting young people. Nor do they acknowledge the significance of the wider context of young people's lives (Kushner, 2000). This paper will seek to explore the actions of 'street-level' workers as they negotiate the demands of both externally imposed targets and those of the young people they work with (Lipsky, 1980).

### **‘Life Skills’ Programmes**

‘Life Skills’ training programmes, part of a ‘Learning Gateway’, intended to re-engage young people in further education, employment or training, through individually tailored support, in particular those excluded from school, non-attendees, care leavers, teenage parents and young offenders (DfEE, 1999a). Delivery was multi-agency with the Connexions Service, providing support through a Personal Adviser (PA), and local Learning and Skills Councils, developing ‘Life Skills’ training programmes to be delivered by training providers (DfEE, 1999a).<sup>[2]</sup>

Attendance was not formally compulsory, however, because of limited post-16 provision there were few alternatives for some young people. Hence, young people with a range of learning needs were directed towards programmes.

The programmes were delivered for 16 hours a week, over three days and included three core components: basic and key skills; vocational training; and personal and social development (DfEE, 1999a). The latter component was presented as a positive aspect of the programmes but was not recognised in reporting processes (Byshee and Hughes, 2002; GHK, 2004).

Timetables incorporated a range of sessions often developed around young people’s interests, including basic skills, arts and crafts, IT, sport and independent living skills. The complement of staff at a programme was a co-ordinator, a trainer and a support worker with occasional sessional staff. Programme workers were from various professional backgrounds including teaching, healthcare, community and youth work. Most had considerable experience of working with young people but often stated that additional training, for example in counselling, was needed. Other professionals delivered specific sessions, such as basic skills, health and safety and drug and alcohol education and some sessions were delivered at a local college. Programmes operated a ‘roll-on, roll-off’ cycle and young people joined and left at different points, initially registered for six months, though this could be extended. The impact was measured by indicators of positive outcomes simply defined as young people entering education, employment or training.

## **Ethnographic Research**

This study aimed to provide an informed understanding of some of the realities and tensions of practice. It was apparent, from previous research, that front-line workers were frustrated with the way in which, while supporting young people in difficult circumstances, they could not define their work in terms of achieving prescribed outcomes. Reliance upon such measures had significant limitations and in particular that developmental work with young people, who might not count as a 'successful' outcome, was not recognised. The programmes were assessed without any reference to the variety of beneficiaries and the wider context of their lives, contexts that might do more to determine 'success' or 'failure' (Kushner, 2000).

Fieldwork was undertaken with three training programmes in a Midlands city in England run by one training provider, selected after initial visits to seven programmes. Claims of representativeness are not made and this research did not aim to generalise, but rather to explore the experiences of those involved and relate this to the broader social and policy context. Fieldwork was conducted from September 2001 to September 2003, although informal visits to programmes continued after this. The research methods combined observation, participant observation and participation in programmes one day each week as well as directed data collection. My presence at programmes and role as researcher was always explicitly identified and reiterated when young people joined. Participation involved 'being around' to develop familiarity with the formal and informal aspects of the programmes, assisting in training sessions, accompanying outings and short courses and a number of residential experiences. Throughout the fieldwork a research diary was maintained, summarising observations and key issues from each visit, and reviewed before subsequent visits to ensure issues and developments were followed up with workers and young people. This also provided a useful background to the directed data collection which followed.



This consisted of focus groups and interviews with young people (n=42), and interviews with programme workers and Connexions PAs (n=8). Focus groups were conducted first to introduce young people to the directed data collection process, gauge their interest in participation in the interview stage and facilitate group discussion with their peers. They aimed to gain young people's views on the training programmes and their thoughts on their progression. Focus groups highlighted that, for a variety of reasons, some young people were not confident and comfortable in this setting, their responses easily influenced by their peers.

For the interview stage with young people, a participatory approach, including photography as a visual tool, was developed. The aim was to conduct interviews at three points during their time on the programme to document progress and explore associated factors. To assist with this, disposable cameras were distributed and young people were asked to photograph things of importance to them, both at the programme, including work placements, and outside the programme, including social activities and home life. The idea, based on previous research experiences, was to facilitate engagement in the research process, assist in discussing issues of personal relevance, including possible self-reflection, and to provide a lens to explain some of the complexity and context of their lives. Conducting the interviews at intervals allowed different sets of questions, about previous and current experiences, to be followed up in different interviews. Young people volunteered to be involved and, while some were eager to participate, not all young people wanted to take part. Programme workers made the final decision on the appropriateness of individuals' participation.

The research process was non-linear and had to be responsive and adaptable as young people joined and left programmes. Opportunities to talk to young people were taken when available and the research process often mirrored the challenges faced by workers, including dealing with unpredictability, lack of confidence and sensitivity to personal situations. This developed further understanding but at times had a limiting effect on the research. It is not possible to provide a generalised profile of the young people due to the diversity of their

biographies. The main commonality was negative, and incomplete, experiences of formal education. Reasons for joining programmes varied considerably and nearly all aimed to enter employment. While problematic personal circumstances were a feature, equally so were supportive parents and siblings.

Interviews with programme workers covered policy implementation and the challenges and positive aspects of delivering the programmes. Interviews with Connexions PAs sought a different perspective of the programmes and brought useful insight in relation to policy discourses, programme provision and the challenges of the target-oriented work environment.

Data was analysed thematically in an attempt to document progress through the programmes from the perspectives of young people, programme workers and PAs and one-to-one work with young people was developed into individual accounts. A qualitative evaluation report, based on the young people's experiences of the programmes, was disseminated among training providers, Connexions and the local Learning and Skills Council and some programme changes were made based on the young people's responses. The following sections communicate some of the findings, in particular the impact of the context of young people's lives in delivering training programmes, observations of young people's progress and finally the implications of the targets set for training programmes. All names have been changed and workers are only identified by their professional role.

### **Accounting for the Context of Young People's Lives**

The challenges of delivering 'Life Skills' programmes must be understood in relation to the young people's previous educational experiences and social context. Hodgson (2002) identified three categories of young people that do not make a successful transition from school into education, employment or training: low attainers; underachievers, and those with learning difficulties. The detrimental impact of negative educational experiences, and their significance in understanding disengagement and reengagement, is not considered in social

exclusion discourses which focus on education and employment in achieving social inclusion. Most young people described disengagement from formal learning, and any form of routine, for a significant period before joining the programmes and framed their lack of concern with this situation in the context of negative experiences of education. Reasons for disengagement differed considerably from policy assumptions about non-participation based on individual deficit and self-exclusion (Colley and Hodgkinson, 2001). Self-exclusion was evident in some cases but there were complex and unacknowledged reasons, such as bullying, behind this where young people described their exclusion from education as ‘imposed’. Exclusion from a school’s main classroom was also common for young people with learning difficulties.

**Case One**

I met Jack (17) on my first visit to one programme and was informed that he was a quiet group member, with low confidence, who had experienced problems with bullying at school. He was also attending the programme to improve his basic level of literacy and Jack told me that he was recently diagnosed with dyslexia. Jack spoke of his exclusion from the main classroom at school and being sent to ‘The Place’ (a class for pupils disrupting lessons *or* unable to participate at the level of other pupils). Jack often refused to go and argued with teachers to stay in the main classroom. He appeared disheartened by his experience of education, noted particularly in relation to art – the one subject where he thought he would get a good result, but he failed to complete the written part of the assessment. He left school with few qualifications or ambitions but said: ‘All I cared about was leaving...’ and in the subsequent months he was ‘hanging around’ at home until his parents persuaded him to join the programme. As part of the programme he attended college one morning a week, to study Maths and English, and identified the value of support from the programme workers and his peers in relation to this.

As basic skills are a core component of programmes, workers had to consider young people’s negative experiences of education, varied levels of ability and associated lack of confidence. Young people were aware this assistance was beneficial but engaging some in such sessions was problematic, especially those delivered by external tutors and in group settings as most young people were nervous about re-entering environments that, to them, resembled formal education. Therefore, this work was closely linked to the on-going fostering of confidence and self-esteem and, where possible, conducted in small groups or individually. From teaching basic skills, addressing issues of authority and building confidence, workers were

both sensitive to young people's experiences as well as encouraging participation in education-based work:

*The people I've got at the moment, because they're very complex, it's not just a case of sitting down and going "oh yeah, you've improved on your Maths and English, you're confidence is a bit better, see you next week." It's not that at all. (Programme worker)*

Ultimately, developments in literacy and numeracy are beneficial, if not necessary in gaining employment (Lloyd and Payne, 2003), as without such basic skills young people's employment opportunities are limited (Bynner, 1998), but progression for some could take considerable time.

For some young people, disengagement from, and lack of formal success in, education was inextricably bound with complex personal circumstances. Support in addressing difficult or chaotic personal circumstances, and dealing with related unpredictability, provided the demanding and intensive context for much of the work. This wider context often manifested itself in young people arriving with issues from the previous evening or weekend. The immediacy of such personal problems needed to be addressed before delivering training-focused work and as an on-going process as progress in other areas would be counter-productive or impossible:

*They are going to come in and they are going to have had a bad day. They might have had a bad weekend. Tom, for instance, disappeared for two weeks. You can't just say "ok, we're going to get you into a job when you come back!" You know, "where have you been, what's happened, you look thin, have you been eating?" Counselling might be an option... And every single one of them in some form, whether it be big or little, has an issue." (Programme worker)*

As well as support, programmes also offered stability and an escape from, or alternative to, an otherwise chaotic social context. The challenge of this wider context is significant in any understanding of the effectiveness and attribution of programmes:

*I don't want to paint a drab picture, but I think most of the young people we've got are undernourished because they did not have good diets when they were younger. They're poorly dressed. They've got bad hygiene, and I'm talking in general. I mean we can't eradicate poverty... but we can give them some form of there is better than this if you work hard and you attend and you've got a reasonable personality, you'll get on... They*

*come here and they look at us and we're here everyday and it's something permanent in their lives. (Programme worker)*

### **Case Two**

Lara (17) had few qualifications but did not need assistance in basic skills and instead of attending these sessions received one-to-one help from a support worker to address personal problems. She frequently arrived at the programme with problems related to her family, her housing situation and involvement in violent incidents. This one-to-one support was identified by Lara, and the support worker, as leading to positive outcomes for Lara because she was talking through and beginning to address her dependence upon alcohol, some of her family issues and her independent living situation.

The high levels of support relied upon the professionalism of the project workers, but the demanding nature and extent of this support is unaccounted for. Workers also had to find a balance between providing such support and ensuring young people were progressing and not becoming too dependent:

*You get phone calls when you're at home... If someone rings you and they're really distressed, you're going to help them aren't you? It's very difficult to be able to switch off... I'll be driving home and... people ring me going "I don't want to go home, I don't want to." It's very difficult and they're of an age as well when there's only certain things you can do... And some of the things that they tell you... It consumes you so much that you've got to have some sort of outlet, whether its sport or whatever. You've got to have something. You couldn't go from here at the end of the night, every night, and not go absolutely mad I think. It wouldn't be possible. (Programme worker)*

### **Case Three**

Kate (17) often moved between her parents' and grandmother's homes and was relied upon as childcare for her younger siblings. The workers closely monitored this context and there were issues they could not disclose to me. The workers were seeking professional support from an arts therapist to work with Kate who would often draw and paint pictures. As a result of a swimming trip with the programme, workers also intervened to address some hygiene-related health issues. After much debate, the workers offered Kate some of their clothes and some toiletries to keep in their office for Kate to access. The workers also arranged a 'girls day' where we went to a local college and the young women had their hair washed and cut, followed by underwear shopping where the worker bought underwear for Kate and an item each for the other two young women. The day ended in a café with a drink and a chat about the day. There were opportunities throughout this informal outing to introduce hygiene-related issues in a non-threatening or too personal way. This only provides anecdotal evidence but is an example of the workers addressing a highly sensitive issue.

MacLagan (1992) has questioned if training programmes should be providing such levels of personal support but it was apparent during this research that, if progress towards achieving the targets was to be made, such support was needed. Workers sought expert advice from professionals but the trust-based relationship established with young people often meant their engagement with other agencies was problematic, creating further demands on the capacity of the workers.

### **Accounting for Progress and Development over Time**

Young people's progression on the programmes was 'process-based', from initial engagement to the gradual establishment of relationships with workers, the growth of confidence and development of skills. This process was observed and explored through the course of this research and these features formed the basis of both young peoples' and workers' descriptions of the programmes. The relationships, it could be argued, are the basis of effective delivery, however, the roles of training programme workers are scarcely mentioned in the programme specifications.

Progress was an individual and gradual process with personal outcomes, such as increased confidence and improvements in punctuality and attendance, difficult to attribute (Ord, 2004). For programme workers success was framed in terms of young people attending every day, improving their appearance and assuming responsibility in the group. These, often significant, developments showed clearly for one worker that a young person had: 'moved along the register of improvement in their lives'. In many ways, the work observed was basic: assisting young people with everyday, taken-for-granted tasks, such as making a phone call; improving personal hygiene; and preparing healthy food. Yet they were highly significant in terms of the young people's progress:

*...to see them progressing and actually being able to hold a conversation and look people in the eye and pick up the phone and speak to a stranger is absolutely amazing.*  
(Programme worker)

The development of confidence, understood by all as apparent through the small steps young people had taken, including travelling alone, participating in group situations and meeting new people, had wider benefits for young people's progress in other aspects of their lives.

#### **Case Four**

Anna (17) had a number of family pressures, mostly related to caring for her mother who suffered ill-health. This had a significant impact on Anna and on many occasions she had to cancel activities arranged with the programme because she was caring for her mother. The programme workers arranged for Anna to talk to a counsellor. Anna also had very low confidence which she identified as the reason for leaving a college course. Initially, she would not travel to the programme alone and was uncomfortable in large groups. Her confidence gradually developed through small group work and encouragement to take part in activities. She appreciated the small group and one-to-one support in basic skills sessions, which she compared to lack of assistance in large classes at school. Anna aimed to work in childcare and the programme workers and her Personal Adviser assisted in securing a placement at a nursery. She appreciated this opportunity: 'It's good because I've got low grades and no Maths or English and I can do what I want.' In the second discussion, she had secured a place on an NVQ level 2 nursery nursing course.

Programmes were often a successful mechanism for gaining work experience and the networks developed by programme workers offered employment opportunities that may otherwise not have been available. This also provided a transition through a supportive semi-independent environment.

The challenges involved in delivering such basic and developmental work highlights a difference between policy expectations and practice. Workers recognised employers would be unaware of the significance of such developments and that the progress may not be sufficient to secure employment. To achieve an apparently simple target, many young people would need support and assistance over a considerable period of time. Moving them on too soon could have a further detrimental impact:

*There are other young people who you know you are going to have for a long time. There's absolutely no way they're going to get on work placements or college yet. You're looking a couple of months down the line, if not a year, before you would even consider putting them in that environment because you'd probably destroy them as people. But that's the problem with the programme. You're supposed to gear them up for that. Well, some young people aren't ready at all. Not even close. (Programme worker)*

There is a clear tension here with workers managing competing priorities, feeling pressurised to move young people into education, training or employment whilst concerned that young people needed to be prepared for this move. An added pressure is when young people do not move on to one of the prescribed outcomes:

*They want us to support them in personal and social issues but there's no clear guidance as to how far you need to go with these... You can fail then, with young people, because you're not able to tick that education or employment box. And you know that you've done as much as you can with that young person for six months and they're a better young person than when they came here. But other people looking at the stats will think "oh, he went on to do nothing". (Programme worker)*

The lack of understanding of the work created a dilemma for the programme workers. Part of their remit was assistance with personal and social development but, in practice, they had to prioritise and address complex needs in order to deliver effective training.

### **Measuring 'success'**

Even when targets were reached, the current indicators were not representative of the practice. For example, Paul (18) spent eighteen months on a programme and was identified as a 'successful' outcome since he eventually gained full-time employment. However, this concealed the varying degrees of support Paul received from the workers and his PA since he was 14 years-old. The indicator of 'successful' outcome, although positive, failed to provide an adequate summary of Paul's experiences or the workers' input. In comparison, Mark (16) entered further education. After a few months on the course, the programme workers were informed that his attendance deteriorated while dealing with personal problems and he was subsequently asked to leave. The workers felt his declining attendance was not detected early enough and that he did not receive the close attention or support that he still needed. Again, this illustrates the inadequacy of such indicators as a measure of performance (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2001).

Many young people described improvements in their lives through engagement with the 'Life Skills' programmes but were still not at the point of moving into education, training or



employment. Improvements in personal situations were not always linked directly to the programmes but they could prove significant to young people and support from programme workers often led to improvements in young people's housing or family situations. Such achievements and developments are not reflected in current understandings of performance.

Throughout the research, programme workers and PAs highlighted tensions between the policy targets and the reality of their work. For example, one PA identified that many young people made 'small leaps' but did not achieve a successful outcome because of 'the sort of issues that they bring', and that fundamentally there was 'a huge gulf' between doing well on a programme and being in a favourable position to secure employment. The difference was largely determined by the wider social and economic context and, in particular, the lack of employment opportunities for young people (Roberts, 1995; Allard, 1996). In an increasingly skilled and qualification driven workforce (DfES, 2002; Lloyd and Payne, 2003), even when a young person progressed to a stage where employment was an option, for those without formal qualifications, or sufficient literacy and numeracy skills, it was difficult to find opportunities in the labour market.

### **Realistic Policy Expectations?**

The targets set for post-16 provision, and the related social exclusion agenda, create a situation where those delivering this provision face a difficult task. This research illustrated a fundamental issue, based on assumptions about young people's developmental state before joining the programmes. Through detailed ethnographic research, it presented an in-depth understanding of training programmes, focusing upon the circumstances of the young people involved and the practices of programme workers. It highlighted the complexity of the work and the tensions in meeting targets and providing high levels of support to young people, without which it would be unlikely that the targets would be reached. This intensive work is dismissed in the formal accounts of the success or failure of programmes, which rely on

numbers of young people entering education, training or employment. Indeed, this focus means that a substantial part of the work is distorted or unrepresented.

In contrast to these formal accounts, a detailed insight into the diverse contexts of young people's lives and the complexity of delivering the programmes provided an understanding of the considerable progress being made at the practice level. Capturing this in formal accounts is problematic, though efforts have been made to develop measurements of 'distance travelled' (Dewson, *et al.*, 2000; Sims, *et al.*, 2001). Currently these efforts reduce complex stories to numbers, along a linear line of progress towards a uniform destination, education, training or employment. This research suggests that even this would fail to allow for an adequate evaluation of the work of these programmes. Perhaps most importantly, performance needs to be understood within the wider social and economic context in which there are limited employment opportunities for young people without formal qualifications.

Policy makers developed an intervention that draws upon simple and generic understandings of the circumstances of young people at the margins. 'Life Skills' programmes were to provide tailored assistance to these young people to get them back into the mainstream. They underestimated the work required to secure these outcomes and have since relied on data that misrepresents the practice. The very basic representation of the young people in a count of numbers on the programmes is misleading, let alone those of 'successful' outcomes. With new investment announced, following a renewed NEET strategy, now is an opportune time to both evaluate provision and appropriate performance measures of post-16 provision.

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<sup>11</sup> In July 2003, Entry to Employment (E2E) was introduced as the national training initiative for young people who had not achieved National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1 qualifications, not attended full-time pre-16 education and were not ready for work or college. In December 2007, £31.5 million investment over 3 years was announced for a new programme to re-engage young people in post-16 learning. This will include a Foundation Learning Tier - for those who will benefit from entry level qualifications, to be fully implemented by 2010. Funding for 16-19 learning is to be transferred from the Learning and Skills Council to Local Authorities, for consultation in early 2008 (DCSF, 2007c).

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<sup>2</sup> The later stages of this fieldwork were undertaken at a transitional period as Entry to Employment (E2E) was introduced. No young people identified any differences at this early stage, however programme workers and Connexions PAs identified the new programmes as more targeted towards moving young people into education or employment and that this would cause further tensions in relation to the young people they worked with and may even mean such young people would not be readily accepted on to some programmes in the future.

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